DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 539 RC 016 476

AUTHOR Berry, De Ann; And Others
TITLE Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America. Learning Guide. First Edition.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-9616762-0-5
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 50p.
AVAILABLE FROM Griesinger Films, Rt. 1, Box 1986, French Creek, WV 26218.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Traits; Educational Resources; Higher Education; *Rural Areas; Rural Economics; Secondary Education; Small Businesses; Social Sciences; Teaching Guides; Values; *Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Appalachia; *West Virginia

ABSTRACT

This learning guide is designed to accompany the 29-minute, color, educational documentary, "Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief," a film which depicts how nine rural West Virginia small business proprietors think and feel about their work and life. It contains a description of the film setting, complete transcript of film dialogue, teaching guide, student questionnaire, suggested readings, biographical data about the filmmakers, note from the producer, film discount coupon, and purchasing information. The film and guide are recommended as a base for in-depth discussion or composition when used in secondary and/or college classrooms or community workshops. The teaching guide section presents values that most readily identify Appalachian culture: traditionalism, familism, neighborliness, love of home place, individualism, personalism, modesty, sense of humor, and religion. Social science themes outlined for discussion are world view, group cohesion, social construction of reality, sociological imagination, Protestant ethic, and Gemeinschaft. (NEC)

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Learning Guide

Merchant People

Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America

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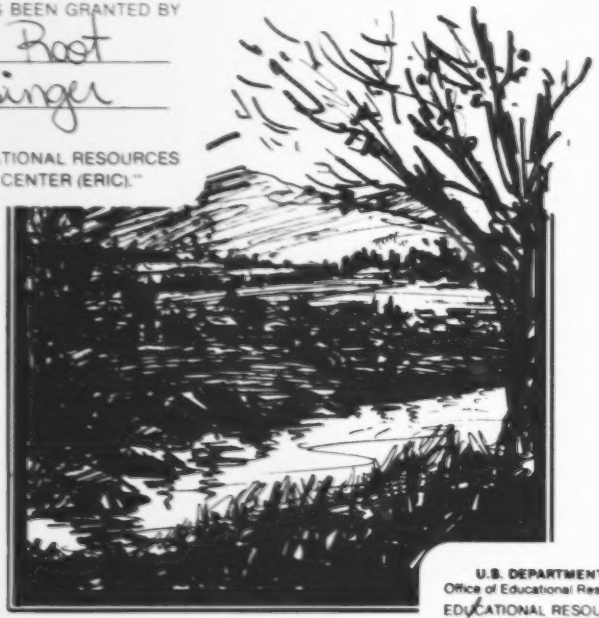

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An
Educational Film Documentary
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Price & Coupon Information

Available in 3/4" and 1/2" Color Videocassette - $80
Also available in 16mm Color Estar Print - $450

Discount Coupon Enclosed (Receive a 10% discount when sending coupon and purchase order found in back of this learning guide.)

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first edition

International Standard Book Number
(ISBN) 0-9616762-0-5

Library of Congress
#86-700064 (Video) #83-706798 (SBMY Film)

Category and Subject Matter Headings:

Sociology
Individualism
Social Ethics
Sociology/Rural

Business and Economics
Small Business

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Contributing Writers: John R. Warner Jr., Ph.D., Betty P. Crickard, Ph.D., Dr. Marvin H. Carr, III and Maurice Brooks

Produced by Peter Root Griesinger for Griesinger Films with additional television underwriting for 'Small Business My Way' by Hecks, Inc., Alamco, Monongahela Power Company and Union Carbide. 'Merchant People' sponsored by Appalachian Fresh Water Foods. Designed and Edited by Michael Herschede. Distributed by Griesinger Films, French Creek, West Virginia.

Learning Guide
for the
29 minute, color
Educational Documentary

Merchant People

Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America

Including:
- Complete Film Dialogue
- Teacher's Guide
- Discount Coupon

Reviews

Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America *is an improved, re-titled educational version of the national PBS television special, "Small Business My Way" (© 1982 Griesinger Films), which aired during May 1983 and July 1984. "Small Business My Way" received the following Awards/Reviews:*

Finalist - 25th American Film Festival 1983 - *Citizen Action*

Winner - 14th Sinking Creek Film Celebration 1983

"A gem...a work of art."

- *Cleveland Plain Dealer 5/83*

"A well edited profile of business people in a small rural community."

- *Catalyst Media Review Vol. 3 #1*

"Small business in mid-20th century America is a tenacious reminder of the historic forces that shaped society. This film permits several small business proprietors in a rural area to reflect, not nostalgically, on the foundations of independent enterprise. The photography is good. There is no narration, but the dialogue has been skillfully edited around a unifying theme."

- *Science Books and Films 1/84*

An 'Editors Choice: Films' Selection

"A good look at local color, rural lifestyle...(a) pleasant film worthy of serious analysis by students of business and anthropology as well as general entertainment for community groups."

- *Library Journal 1/84*

"'Small Business My Way' succeeds in communicating how these citizens think and feel about their work."

- *American Anthropologist 6/84*

"An original and most unusual portrait of small business in America...an upbeat and personal Griesinger Films production."

- *Lawrence K. Grossman, President, Public Broadcasting Service, Washington, D.C.*

"One of the rare filmmakers who can contribute a compelling blend of color and emotion and content to the normally bland, noncreative world of the traditional documentary."

- *William F. Baker, Ph.D., President - Television Group, Westinghouse Broadcasting and Cable, Inc., New York, New York*

Merchant People

Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America

"'Merchant People' is an inside look at the struggles, strengths, prejudices and achievements of nine rural Appalachians. The voices and portraits ring with authenticity; by turns courageous, defensive, and committed, these people stand for a way of life. Listening to them promotes, in terms both personal and memorable, a deeper understanding of an increasingly isolated small town America."

- Jayne Ann Phillips, author 'Machine Dreams' and 'Black Tickets'

"The ultimate statement of the film fits the current economic and political moods of the country. Hard sustained work and rugged individualism are the keys to these 'merchant people's' success as well as their personal happiness and pride. The film plays beautifully with excellent photography, color, music, sound, and editing."

-Patricia A. Gwartney-Gibbs, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon for Science Books and Films Vol. 21 #1 published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, D.C.

"The shotgun editing style and rich indigenous music elevate the subjects' heroism to a mythic dimension."

- Scott Bartlett, experimental filmmaker 'Offon', 'Moon', 'Medina', special effects coordinator - 'Altered States', and producer/designer cable access 'Space Ship Earth', Tampa, Florida

"This is cultural anthropology...an ethnographic record. It is a study of an American tribe uninterpreted, undefended. Griesinger and Herschede have done for this dying breed what Curtis did for the Plains Indians. They recorded them before they disappeared."

-John R. Warner Jr., Ph.D., Chairman, Dept. of Sociology, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, West Virginia

Introduction

"Working from the perspective that people can be understood by having some of their most mundane assumptions noticed and recorded, we offer this document."

- Peter Griesinger
- Michael Herschede

Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America is a commentary and a historical documentary on the attitudes and social ethics of an American middle class. The social impact is significant as the film was initiated during the last few months of the Carter presidency and completed during the Reagan administration-a historic time frame distinguished by an unprecedented number of small business failures and widespread economic turmoil and instability. 'Merchant People' is a lesson to all...a story of survival, guts, and determination in establishing and maintaining an independent way of life. This film is an excellent resource tool, and can provide a base for in-depth discussion or composition when used in the classroom or workshop.

AUDIENCE:

Senior High - Advanced Study Level
- *Social Studies/Civics/World Culture*
- *English Composition*
- *Business*

College - Sociology/Anthropology/Humanities
- *Introductory Sociology and Anthropology*
- *Rural Sociology*
- *Appalachian Studies*
- *Community Studies*
- *Peasant Society*
- *American Culture and Personality*
- *Social Change and Modernization*
- *Social and Business Ethics*
- *Community and Civic Political Activity*
- *Independent Filmmaking/Research Methods*

College - Business
- *Contemporary American Regional Economics*
- *Entrepreneurial Education*
- *Small Business Management*
- *Business Ethics*
- *Women in Business*

Pastoral Ministry
- *Community Stress/Pressures*

Public Libraries
Profiles, Regional Studies, Work Issues, Alternative Lifestyles, Traditional American Values

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THE SETTING

UPSHUR COUNTY

Should a person seek for one single county to epitomize the entire State of West Virginia, its physiography and topography, its geology, its biology, and its people, he might well begin and end with the County of Upshur. Located not far from the geographical center of the State, its boundaries embrace approximately 355 square miles which may be considered typical of West Virginia as a whole.

The larger part of West Virginia lies west of the main Allegheny Crest, and forms a part of the Allegheny Plateau. Upshur County falls within this region, its broken and irregular ridges rising to 3,050 feet above sea-level near Palace Valley, and its streams descending to 1,038 feet where the Little Kanawha River leaves the County at Ingo. Thus the County has a mean elevational difference of over two thousand feet. Many tumbling mountain streams carry off the abundant rainfall (the average yearly precipitation being about 60 inches in the southeastern part of the County). Since the ridges and valleys have irregular patterns, the streams have a dendritic character, branching out like the divisions of a tree.

Like many portions of the State of West Virginia, Upshur County is drained by several rivers. By far the largest part of its area is reached by the Buckhannon River and its tributaries, but there is a considerable drainage into the Middle Fork River, another sizeable area which forms a part of the headwaters territory of the Little Kanawha River, and a fourth (and smaller) part which is drained by the West Fork River. Not far from Rock Cave is the divide between the Monongahela and the Little Kanawha River systems.

It is fitting that a County selected to typify West Virginia should be underlain with coal, oil, and gas. All three of these Upshur County has not perhaps in quantities as great as elsewhere, but sufficiently abundant to make their development commercially profitable. All of the County's surface was formed under water during the Carboniferous Period of the geologist, was elevated and folded in the Appalachian Revolution, and has been, for hundreds of millions of years, above water and free of permanent ice.

For the sake of convenience the biologist divides all of North America into two general regions; one where the climate is mild, and the other where severe cold prevails. Between these two regions is an area where the plants and animals of the warm and the cold regions meet and mingle, and on this border Upshur County is located. In the dense forests which once covered the entire area were to be found fine stands of such northern forest trees as hemlock, sugar maple, beech, basswood, black cherry, and yellow birch, but with them were such southern-association trees as yellow poplar, sycamore, persimmon, pawpaw, umbrella magnolia, and American holy.

American chestnuts (now unfortunately gone), hickories and oaks of many species, black and white walnuts, and hazels furnished abundant food for wild game, and contributed their share to the happiness (and economic profit) of the human inhabitants. Although practically all of these original forests have been cut, so favorable is the region for the growth of trees that a second-growth forest of good proportions now covers much of the County.

The shrubs and wild flowers also serve well to show the transition nature of the region. Rhododendron, mountain laurel, azaleas in a bewildering array of colors, at least thirty native ferns, twenty-five lilies, and more than twenty orchids carry color to the hillsides and valleys.

About two hundred species of birds (roughly two-thirds of all those recorded from West Virginia) have been noted in the County. Resident species include the northern veeries, black-throated blue, black-throated green, Canada and

magnolia warblers, and such southern species as cerulean, hooded, Kentucky, and worm-eating warblers, white-eyed vireo, summer tanagar, and Bachman's sparrow.

Even the people are representative of the entire State. Substantial English families from Virginia, Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania, and sturdy New Englanders were among the early settlers, with fine people of German-Swiss extraction arriving a little later.

In all these ways, and in many others, Upshur County stands as a worthy representative of the entire State. It is neither the richest nor the poorest, the largest nor the smallest, the highest nor the lowest, the most nor the least populous. Its people have been conservative as befits those who occupy a middle position.

One other unforgettable picture of the County I hold in my mind. During those summers of burning drought between 1930 and 1935 I had occasion to spend much of my time in other parts of the State. Wherever I went I saw streams dried up, grass burned brown, and trees and crops standing wilted and lifeless. How eager therefore I turned toward the Upshur County hills, for there, miraculous to relate, the grass stayed green all summer; there was a freshness in the air, and at night cool breezes dropped softly down from the mountains.

MAURICE BROOKS
West Virginia University
First Published in 1941 by the
Fred Brooks Garden Club
Buckhannon, West Virginia

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Complete Film Dialogue

Introductory Roll

Interviewed in a remote Appalachian community in West Virginia during recessionary times...(1979-1980), nine rural American merchants speak out about essential philosophies and approaches to their work and life. Emphasizing a personal sense of autonomy, self-reliance, and freedom from governmental interference, this film is an authentic inquiry into the deeply rooted American tradition of self-help and individualism--a controversial portrait of survival.

TITLES--OPENING

Train, tunnel, and countryside
Arrival, small town

(Foreword)

"We, now, are moving so quickly...we're moving so rapidly, that we don't have time to pause."

"What we want is a commodity. We want it at the least cost. We want it now, and we do not care about any of the trivial things that accompany it."

"So, how can a small businessman survive? It is most difficult, because the people will not patronize small groups any longer."

"So, that is a period that is fading away. I don't think we will ever be able to recapture it because we cannot go back to yesterday. And, I don't think the small businessman can survive in the atmosphere where people are looking for something quickly, at the lowest possible cost...NOW!"

WORK/MUSIC - 'NOW'

HISTORY

LOYALTY

HILL STUMP
ADRIAN-BUCKHANNON BANK
Chairman of the Board
(retired)

BioNote
55 years of banking experience
Soil Conservationist

Hill: "You know, there were thirty-four thousand banks in the United States in 1930...1929 and '30...and at the end of the Depression there had been less than four thousand still open without rechartering or something of the kind. We were one of the four thousand."

"When the banks closed here for two years, people asked me to pick up their deposits and take them to Adrian, because there was no bank here. And I went around the town every morning and picked up the deposits and took them to Adrian. There were...at times, I would have fifty thousand dollars laying on the seat of my car by the side of me."

SELF-RELIANCE

PAT HOWARD
CENTER BAR AND GRILL
Manager

BioNote:
Entered business due to her mother's illness
Single mother with 5 children

Pat: "I think my mother has done a darn good job. She has always done this kind of work. So to her she has reached her peak, on this. She wants to do more but I think she better stick with this. And for myself, that's just not what I had in mind."

"She bought this seven years ago and she's ran it continuously-- owned and operated since that time. I thought that's too much responsibility. You get too many things to worry about. I thought my mother was crazy when she bought this place. She called me one morning, she said...'Guess what I did! I bought the Center!', I said...'You're crazy!'"

HARD WORK

C.R. "BUD" BENNETT
BUD BENNETT MOTORS
Owner-Operator
(retired)

BioNote:
Community businessman for 47 years
Buckhannon Firechief

Bud: "Really and truly, my mother raised us that we had to work. My father, ahh, was gone a lot of the time and I had to help my mother and sisters...we all worked together. Our family worked. Everybody worked."

"I had an opportunity in 1952...January the 15th to be exact...to get into the automobile business for myself. I'd been a sales manager for Fenton. I bought a half interest in Queen Motors with Homer Queen. After, ohh, two years...I bought Mr. Queen out and changed it to 'Bud Bennett Motors' and I kept that up until September the 15th, 1975 when I sold the agency and kept the real estate."

RELIGIOUS FAITH

EVELYN SAYRE
SELBYVILLE POST OFFICE AND GENERAL STORE
Owner-Operator

BioNote:
Storekeeper 27 years
Widowed 2 years

Uncle Robert: "Her daddy was my brother and she has been awful close to us."

Evelyn: "If it hadn't been for dad though, I wouldn't have been where I'm at. He really helped us to get started...my dad did."

"We lived in with them and then we bought the store in Alexander. We had a store down there for five years. When we bought down there, why he loaned us the money to buy that 'cause we didn't have any income. Then when we moved up here, why he helped us. He loaned us the money or went to the bank and borrowed the money. It went on our note at the bank."

"Then, they moved over here. They're the ones that live over here. They moved over here. And he, he was just, he just helped me! That's all there is to it. Whenever, you know, I needed to go someplace or anything, why he was right here ready to help me. In fact, I think that was the only reason he moved down here was just to help me out."

FINANCIAL SECURITY

J.D. HINKLE, JR.
J.D. HINKLE AND SONS, INC.
Chairman of the Board

BioNote:
Mayor 14 years
State Senator 9 years

J.D.: "My mother and father started here in 1918. They started on the corner up here at Shannon's Hardware in 1918...moved here in 1918. This is one of the oldest continuing businesses that's going on in this county and in this city. We didn't own the filling station there. The pumps sit out front here, and they were hand pumps where you pumped the gasoline out visible globes and drained it into the cars. This was my home, which is now our office. I was born here in 1922...and then we went from there."

"Got into the post and rail fence business in 1929 and '30 which we are still in. That's the fence like you see in front of the hotel over there...we ship that all over the United States. We acquired this property when we bought West's swimming pool in 1963. That's built on a vacant lot...just a big hole in the ground we filled with the dirt from the...a lot of it came from the old college football field where Rockefeller Center now stands."

INDEPENDENCE

WALLY LESKUSKI
WALLY'S LAUNDROMAT AND CAR WASH
Owner-Operator

BioNote:
Operates business by himself
Two sons in college

Wally: "I, ahh, I'm sure that I would do well in some other business. Because I have been in business practically all my life."

"That's all I know, business!"

"I did it all myself...I'm by myself. I'm a self-made man."

"I didn't give up. I put 28 washers in here...and eight more dryers in here, in this room. Now this is the largest laundromat in the state of West Virginia!"

"Well, I don't know. I started off in my young days with nothing!"

"July the first, I'll be 60 years old. I weigh 180 to 190 pounds. I control myself, that way."

"I'm careful what I eat and how much I eat, when I get hungry."

RIGHT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

PAUL SMITH
PAUL'S EXXON
Entrepreneur

BioNote
Campaigning for county Sheriff
Local Shriners Club president

Paul: "I've just sold my car business, my lot, my building on a lease purchase agreement and I'm sure this guy is going to take it. I bought this gas station...my wife wanted something to do. She is operating this in its entirety. She has lots of problems. There is a monumental amount of paperwork that she has to go through, today. There is just so many things that the small businessman has to go through because of the harassment and the large backlog of paperwork that is set upon us by the Washington and state bureaucracies."

FRUGALITY

GERALD HAYES
HAYES SUNOCO
Co-Owner/Operator

BioNote
In business 20 years with his wife Madge
WW II Veteran

Gerald: "We spend about thirteen hours a day here. There haven't been very many days that we have been off...couple of days a year usually. Well, we close on Christmas and Thanksgiving."

DISCIPLINE

STEVE HOLMES
UPSHUR AGENCY, INC.
President

BioNote:
Largest land service company
in the state for the coal, oil, and gas industries
Single father with 2 children

Steve: "We started in 1971 essentially as an insurance agency and a real estate firm. The insurance was self-supportive...there wasn't a great deal of profit involved, and the real estate at that point in time was very profitable. In 1973, we had, as everyone will remember, the first gas shortage. My business depended on out of state--Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland personnel--people--coming in to buy our rural land for vacation homes or as investments. Well, that gas shortage put a crunch to it...stopped it dead."

"So, I moved into working for Consolidated Coal Company at that point, doing a title and a coal leasing project for them. But that crisis in '73 forced me to do it, otherwise, I never would have."

PARADE/DRUMS

SUCCESS

Bud: "You know, my advice to anyone today, that is thinking of going into business...you have to analyze a lot of things, if you're going to go into business. Where? You have to have a place to go into business. What is the rent going to be? What is your overhead going to be? The secret of being successful in any business is controlling your overhead."

Steve: "In order to be successful, I've managed to have people that are super...that care...that are diligent...that worry about what they do, today. What the quality...how the quality of their work is...that they are there everyday. I don't have to worry about absenteeism, because my people are, proudly, the best there is...in what we do."

Wally: "I sure do feel successful...and it was just good management on my part of business...how I handled it. I'm proud of myself!"

J.D.: "What is necessary in this life to make a success out of yourself is hard work..."

J.D.'s wife, Maxine (off camera): "Good management..."

J.D.: "And liking what you do. I have a very good friend that...ahh, his statement is this, 'If you get up in the morning and you don't want to go to work, you better look for another job.'"

Steve: "We sold the insurance agency altogether. It got to a point it was no longer fun anyway. The paperwork was burying. I'd come in the morning and the stack would be a foot high on my desk. All I could do was sit and sign forms. I couldn't go out and acquire policies. I couldn't talk with the people. I'd have to do the red-tape work. And I hated that."

Evelyn: "I enjoy this...it's hard. It's hard work, but you don't get anything if you don't work for it. The Bible says, 'You earn your bread by the sweat of your brow.' So, that's the way I feel."

Bud: "If you are willing to apply yourself, anytime, I don't care when it is...you can...anyone can make a good living. But it is the hours after the eight hours that really makes you successful."

Wally: "It's almost day and night, you might say, except when you're not sleeping...when you're in business...in this coin-op business. My golden rule is...if you take care of your business, it will take care of you. And it paid off."

J.D.: "You know the 'A' students have little trouble... they'll make it. The 'D' students have problems. The 'C' students and the 'B' students are really the backbone of the country. They're the ones who do the work. They're the ones who pays the bills."

Pat: "I didn't want to go into accounting or book-keeping or anything of that sort. I did have a course in business college. It helped me somewhat... but not all that much. I didn't think I could do this."

Evelyn: "If it wasn't for the help of the Lord, I just couldn't get along. I just leave everything up to Him because I know with...with everything that, you know...I've had a lot of trials and tribulations. Asa was sick for many years and I had all, most of it to do. But after all, he was here with me. It wasn't like being alone now."

Pat: "There is a lot of work to it...especially when a woman is by herself."

Evelyn: "After Asa died, she kept bugging me, 'Well, why don't you just sell out and leave. You got nothing here.' At the time being, I felt like I didn't have anything. But then I realized that I had my friends and like I say, I knew that I had to go ahead and live..."

"You can't pull up and leave just because things don't go right. That's right! Because things don't go right and things are rough...you just can't pull up and say, 'Well, I'm done, I'm gonna quit!'"

Pat: "It gives me a really good sense of security in myself. I don't have to be entirely dependent on somebody else...ever!"

Evelyn: "I have a boy and girl but...ahh, they're younger and they don't...Linda would never take this business. She does the mail for me occasionally. When she comes up here she'll say...I'll try to be getting them in, or somebody wants gas, or somebody wants something out of the store and Linda will say, 'Boy, I don't see how you do this. I just wouldn't do this. There's an easier way to make a living!'...you know, she'll say. And I'll say, 'Well, maybe there, there is an easier way to make a living, but this is my way!'"

Robert's wife (off camera): "This is home..."

Evelyn: "Ahh, huh!"

Interviewer: "How did you pull the bank through the Depression?"

Hill: "Mister, I can't tell you..."

Hill's Associate: "Nerve and confidence...at that time, a man's bond...a man's word was his bond as much as anything. Isn't that right, Hill?"

Hill: "People came to me and asked, 'Are you going to be able to keep your bank open? If you are, I will leave my money with you. If not, I'll move it someplace else.' The only thing I could tell them was...if the people left their money in the bank with us, that we were solvent and we would pull through. If they decided to take their money out, why...we would have to close. That was the way we pulled the bank through."

Pat: "This fella had a knife, he had another guy fighting with him and I ran up and grabbed his hand like that and he came down and got me with a knife. Just a small cut, but it shook me up a little bit. I got hit under my chin with a glass full of beer...this guy really laid a good one on me! Shook me up, but I didn't hit the floor! I've had ash trays thrown at me, cue sticks, cue balls...you have to learn to be a good dodger!"

Hill's Associate: "We took orders. They got the money from the cash drawer. When Hill Stump saw his opportunity he kicked the bandit and then grabbed the gun and shot him. They were able to get into the car and make their get-a-way, but one man died on his way down to Buckhannon. The other man, ahh, I called the..."

Hill: "I followed them in a car..."

Hill's Associate: "Hill followed them in the car after reloading his gun and they were both caught...or one was killed and the other man was caught and served his term. That was another point of advertisement for the bank...was marking the bank hold-up people."

PUBLIC

Wally: "Still, they have a dollar in their pocket...they do not want to go to the dollar bill changer and I'm here to serve the public. That's one of the hardest things on me all day--giving change out to the public. Sometimes I get away and hide. So, I like the public. I know my people. They have been coming here for fifteen years...some of them...in my laundromat...doing their clothes."

Pat: "I check on some of my customers. If they don't show up I worry about them. I'll say, 'Have you seen old John today?' and they'll say, 'No.' He might be sick so somebody goes and checks on him. Sometimes it turns out that that's what really happened! So, you get involved with your customers. You worry about 'em...if they are eating right or maybe they're drinking a little too much or they're not taking medication like they should be. You get some people that don't drink at all. I know they're on medication and I'll say, 'Have you taken your medication today?'"

Hill: "I don't care how big the bank is--the people on the outside are the ones that can keep your bank open. If they have confidence in the personnel of the bank, you'll be able to go through with it."

BANK VAULT/DRUMS

DILEMMA

Paul: "The banks, for example. The high interest rates. It looks like we're not going to have small business. There's no way they can make it. Fifteen percent you cannot pay. You cannot pay 15% and stay in business when your margin of profit today is like 2 or 3% after taxes."

Gerald: "You can buy something today...by the time you sell it off and buy it again, say next week or next month, your profit's all gone. It costs you what you make on it to replace it. Just not a whole lot that you can do about it, only just hope for the best, that's all I can say."

Steve: "If we were going to start this kind of business today--at the scope that it's at now or the level it's at

now--I don't believe it would be possible to do. Your cost of acquiring...the properties, the facility, the phones, the papers, the copiers, the typewriters...is almost prohibitive."

Gerald: "There's going to be a lot of people squeezed out. Everytime you pick up a news bulletin or anything...this one or that one is going out of business, or that company or this one is shut down."

"I think one thing that we are going to have to do though is people's going to have to live, I mean get along on less and work harder at it if we make a go of it now."

MOUNTAIN CHURCH/BELLS

GOVERNMENT

J.D.: "In regard to our welfare and social programs in the state of West Virginia and all over the country or wherever...there are alot of things under the welfare program that I don't feel should be there."

Paul: "We've had enough. Enough is enough. We're not going to spend any more money, we don't want any more people hired and we do not want anymore government money! This money has to come from somewhere and it comes from somebody's pockets!"

J.D.: "I think what gets to the people is the fact that we have some people who don't work that have been on welfare all their lives...their childrens on 'em and their childrens on 'em."

Paul: "There's generation after generation of people that is on public welfare. This should not be. There's got to be a better way."

J.D.: "If you draw it, you work for it! At least you come out at 8:00 in the morning and don't go home until 4:00, whether you do anything or not, at least you're off the streets and not laying in bed just drawing a check."

Paul: "I don't care if a man is on crutches! He can make a list of work crews, this sort of thing! And I think that man's dignity can better be served by doing something and fulfilling his life than to be given things for nothing."

J.D.: "We have built in so many programs from the federal government to...to state government, to county government, to school systems...I don't know whether you could clean it up in a lifetime."

Bud: "There are people, environmentalists if you will--EPA--that are absolutely over-regulating. The government is over-regulating. They have got regulation on top of regulation, criticizing regulations, and these environmental people, alot of them, really and truly, and I mean this sincerely, don't know enough to come in out of the rain."

Paul: "I think there is a need for protecting our environment. But I think sometimes they go too far. One guy says, 'Put oil on a road of a strip job.' The other says, 'No, you're polluting the streams.' They don't know...one doesn't know what the other is doing."

Bud: "As long as we do not hurt our neighbors! No one wants to ruin a stream! No one's going to ruin a stream! We have a Department of Natural Resources in West Virginia that's a beautiful outfit..."

Paul: "Now is the time for this State. We have all kinds of coal. We've got all kinds of energy. The federal government isn't letting us mine this coal and we ought to tell the federal government just to go to hell!"

Bud: "Why do we need a bunch of guys out of Philadelphia or New York to come down here and tell our people how to manage the hills of West Virginia and the streams of West Virginia? We have been mining coal in West Virginia since, my Lord, back in the 20's, in fact, since the beginning of West Virginia!"

Hill: "That strip mining...you certainly make your money in a hurry...then you're gone!"

SUNRISE/CHIMES

COMMUNITY

Hill: "The people living here are living in one of the best sections of West Virginia."

FACES/MUSIC–'COMMUNITY'

Steve: "The job opportunities in Buckhannon are relatively limited if you look at it on the surface. On the surface, it looks like a very few light industrial concerns and mining. That looks, on the surface, to be it. But in reality, there are a number of jobs...a variety of jobs here...some of which the people have created out of necessity!"

J.D.: "The city of Buckhannon, financially, is in sound shape...will remain in sound shape because it's built on a business-like basis. It's a non-partisan council, a non-partisan mayor...they use sound judgement...they have to have a balanced budget. If they don't have the money, they can't spend it!"

Wally: "I feel, I feel as though the town is growing. We need an automatic car wash here and the public are asking me. And I am doing it. We need one here. If I don't put one in, someone else will. And I feel as though my tomato is ripe...and that's when I pick 'em!"

SURVIVAL

Gerald: "Well, it's a good time...we've had a pretty good time in the last 15 or 20 years. You know that. People's got money now that they didn't have years ago. A kid comes along and says, 'Dad, give me a dollar or give me five dollars.' Why, they usually get it! Back when we was kids growing up, they didn't have that to give."

J.D.: "We have things pretty good in this country. I don't want to go back forty years, I'll tell you."

Evelyn: "If I, if I had it to do over, I...I'd live it just like I have. I think I would. There may be some changes, but not that many."

Hill: "Mm' maybe I, ahh, was a little too venturesome and so forth, but it paid off! That's all."

Pat: "If I had to, I could go out and open up a little hot dog stand along the road somewhere. I know I could make it. I might not get rich, but I'd survive."

Wally: "It's up to yourself. If you want to make it, OKAY...you can make it!"

Steve: "I, I have always looked at it this way. If I fail at this today or something happens and this business dissolves, well, I'll pick up and I'll go on and I'll do something else...as everyone that works for me would do themselves. It's just that, that is the way it is. It's not something that hangs like a black cloud over our head...it's just...that's the way it is."

FREEZE--NINE FACES/SILENCE
END/MUSIC--'Community' (Repeat)
CREDITS--In Memory of Mr. Hill Stump 1886-1983

CREDITS

Filmed in Upshur County, WV
Interviews Recorded June 1980
Foreword by A.J. Manchin
Sound by Dan Green, Dennis Berry, and DeAnn Berry
Designed and Edited by Michael Herschede
Produced and Directed by Peter Griesinger

Title Colorist - *Jayne Rosenberg*
Camera - *Peter Root Griesinger*
Opticals - *Dave Schwartz*
Negative Matching - *Lawrence Mischel/Jim Lenkowski*
Sound Transfers - *Sound One Corp*
Sound Mix - *Lee Dichter, Photo-Mag Sound Studios*
Color - *TVC Laboratories, Inc.*
Video Post Production - *TVC Video, Inc.*
Videotape Editor - *Gilbert Berat*
Colorist - *David Reif*
Graphics - *Libby Heller*
Videotape - *Roger Duran/ Nelson Mir*
Supplies and Rentals - *Behrends, Inc./Laumic Co., Inc.*

MUSIC

Produced by Peter Griesinger
Directed and Arranged by Michael Herschede
"Now" - Composed and Performed by Michael Craver/Piano, Burr Beard/Hammer Dulcimer, Michael Herschede/Drums
"Community" - Composed and performed by Tom Espinola
Recorded and Mixed at Bias Recording Co., Inc.
Bill McElroy - Recording Engineer

SPECIAL THANKS

Robert Campbell, Freyda Epstein, French See, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gillispie, John R. Warner Jr., Ph.D., William F. Baker, Ph.D., Charleston Newspapers, Record-Delta Newspaper, West Virginia University Library, Gibson Memorial Library, Upshur County Library, Upshur County Commission, Upshur County Kiwanis, City of Buckhannon, West Virginia Governor's Honors Academy

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Produced by Peter Root Griesinger for Griesinger Films with additional television underwriting for 'Small Business My Way' by Hecks, Inc., Alamco, Monongahela Power Company, and Union Carbide. 'Merchant People' sponsored by Appalachian Fresh Water Foods. Designed and Edited by Michael Herschede. Distributed by Griesinger Films, French Creek, West Virginia.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TEACHING GUIDE

As a piece of cultural research, the purpose of this project is to encourage discussion of contemporary themes and issues. The film itself, and the materials in the Learning Guide, have been designed to permit open discussion of the subjects involved. Our emphasis has been to provide original 'source' materials that allow the student to reach his/her own conclusions.

The following selections, including a section about the filmmakers and a statement from the producer, continue the documentary approach. Local contributing writers present background information that can be used selectively by teachers or classroom leaders.

The material is divided into seven separate sections.

1. **Historical Background**
2. **Cultural Values**
3. **Themes for the Social Sciences**
4. **Student Questionaire**
5. **Suggested Readings**
6. **About the Filmmakers**
7. **A Note From the Producer**

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Scotch-Irish experience and heritage of being abused by government authorities, (whether from the English in the 1700's or the landed eastern Virginians in the 1800's), underlies the egalitarianism, the pride and independence, caution, and ofttimes suspicious spirit of the "West-by-God-Virginians". The determination to survive and at the same time to keep dignity and independence intact is a constant quality from the days of the earliest settling to the present.

Observers reveal that West Virginia/Appalachia has been an integral part of the development of industrial America. Joel Garreau (The Nine Nations of North America) puts northern Appalachia and the central coal fields in "The Foundry", the classical coal-steel-auto industrial complex from the mid-Atlantic states to the Great Lakes. Ronald Eller (Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers) points out that between 1880-1930 the isolated mountain farm culture was integrated into the national industrial system; "the mountaineers had become miners and millhands." John Williams (West Virginia and the Captains of Industry) describes how, largely through the efforts of its four U.S. Senators (1870-1910), the ownership of a staggering majority of West Virginia's natural resources slipped through the hands of local farm owners into the coffers of the Baltimore/Pittsburgh/New York bankers, businessmen, and politicians.

The irony is that one of the richest states in resources (number one in gas and oil production at the turn of the century and number one until recently in coal production) failed to receive a just return. Education, health, social services and employment have lagged behind the nation. Some have likened Appalachia to an internal colony or a third world nation.

Upshur County is on the southern edge of where "northern Appalachia" meets "central Appalachia" along the Allegheny

mountain plateau. Throughout the great out-migration (1940-1975), during the Depression, World War II, and the coal depression of the fifties, Upshur County lost fewer people than the surrounding counties, and in the recent upsurge, gained more. Part of the difference was the success of local leaders to create small businesses and to attract some new firms, so that there was a diversified pattern in the county.

The persons in the film represent one slice of our local community and the Appalachian region where the traditional Appalachian values, forged out of historical and personal experience, coalesce with the middle class values of our nation. Small business men and women have been a neglected part of the story of Appalachia, and this film allows nine of these persons to speak for themselves.

Dr. Marvin H. Carr III, Appalachian Studies
West Virginia Wesleyan College
Buckhannon, West Virginia

2. CULTURAL VALUES

West Virginia/Appalachia is a sub-region with some distinctive characteristics. Dr. Betty P. Crickard of the West Virginia University Extension Service has focused on nine values that most readily identify Appalachian culture. Individually each of the values are not unique to Appalachia. A specific pattern emerges only after understanding how interrelated these values are within the region and how intensely they are felt.

CULTURAL VALUES OF THE APPALACHIAN PEOPLE

By Betty P. Crickard, Ph. D.

1. **Traditionalism:** This is often seen as being negative: resisting change and new ideas. Positive aspects: experience is the best teacher.

2. **Familism:** Strong family loyalty.

3. **Neighborliness:** Generosity and Hospitality - good neighbors are important.

4. **Love of Home Place:** Home is special - the scene of good experiences and reunions.

5. **Individualism:** 'Mountaineers are always free' - a proud people, independent and self-reliant.

6. **Personalism:** Most operative and evident App. value. Desire to relate on a personal level, people are known for 'who they are' rather than by 'what they do'. Whole individuals unencumbered by role definition, time is secondary.

7. **Modesty:** Assertive, not pushy or aggressive - 'Just as good as any one else, but no better.'

8. **Sense of Humor:** Wry sense of humor: 'putting people on' practical jokes, tall tales.

9. **Religion:** Permeates culture - not equated to church membership or attendance.

Dr. B.B. Maurer of West Virginia University observes that West Virginians are 'bi-cultural' - a blend of traditional Appalachian and American middle class values. 'Merchant People' provides an excellent forum from which this unique 'bi-cultural' identity may be observed. In the Dialogue section of the Learning Guide each character has been assigned a value.

After watching the film, compare the American middle class values listed above with Dr. Crickard's Appalachian value patterns. Which combinations of the two lists might best be used to describe the patterns of life in your area?

3. THEMES FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

By John R. Warner, Jr., Ph. D.
Chairman, Department of Sociology
West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WV

PURPOSE OF THE FILM

Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America allows students to observe several themes developed in the social sciences. Students may witness the "world view" held in common by members of a "community" of persons living in a "Gemeinschaft" setting in small-town U.S.A. We see here the "social construction of reality," and can attempt to distinguish between the point of view presented by the actors seen in the film and the filmmakers. Students are asked to apply their "sociological imagination" to the film, and to recognize the "work ethic" of the characters in the film.

HOW TO USE THE FILM IN CLASS

1. I use the film early in my Principles of Sociology class. For me, the introductory class in Sociology is a liberation class. It teaches "liberal art." Liberation means escaping from the cave of blindness and ignorance. The introductory class is the time when I attempt to show how all groups construct sets of "definitions of the situations," and then "reify" those definitions. We all reify our own opinions.

   These reified definitions construct the prison, as Peter Berger points out in "Invitation to Sociology," in which we all live. Escape is possible, however, for those who recognize that the walls of the prison are not impregnable, but are only "social agreements."

2. Later in the course I turn back to the film as new themes are introduced: the sociological imagination, Gemeinschaft, the Protestant Ethic, etc.

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

1. **World View**. The first purpose of the film is to portray a "world view" held by nine small business persons in one small county in West Virginia, and to help the student understand what a "world view" is and how it shapes our lives. It is our hope that in studying this "world view" the student can look more objectively at his/her own "world view," and hold it up to the light of criticism just as he/she might criticize the "world view" portrayed in this film.

   The "world view" seen here is a picture drawn independently by nine seperate people. Yet, there are common themes indicating

that these nine persons see essentially the same "world" when they look out at it. Some viewers will disagree with this explanation of how the world works.

2. **Group Cohesion.** Shared world views draw us together. All societies bind themselves with shared ideals and shared images of what is right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust. Those shared images are found among play groups, the old men in the city park, and the members of a high school basketball team.
Although these nine business men and women live quite independent lives, they all participate in a community of belief. They work cooperatively among themselves because of their common values, common norms, common myths. In sociology we speak of the integrative or cohesive power of such shared beliefs. According to Emile Durkheim, these shared beliefs are the very glue of society. They keep us from falling apart.

3. **Social Construction of Reality.** We believe that the "picture" drawn by these nine people is not a unique one, but one with which many other Americans would agree, even others who have never owned a business, lived in a small town, or visited West Virginia. The image drawn here captures some of the most basic things we tell ourselves about our nation: the virtue of hard work, the justice of a world which "rewards" those who "keep their nose to the grindstone."
The student is asked to examine, through class discussion after seeing the film, his/her own world view:

Why does he/she cling to certain beliefs about "how the world is made," and why do alternative "world views" seem strange, naive, or even laughable? Is there a "real world" with which these people are "out of touch"? Or do we all construct "pictures" which would be criticized by those whose experiences are unlike our own?

4. **The Sociological Imagination.** In his book "The Sociological Imagination", C. Wright Mills asks students to use their sociological imagination to see their own social location on the greater social map of the world, and to understand that location in light of the larger map.

Do the characters in 'Merchant People' see their social location?

When Bud Bennett claims that West Virginians "have been mining coal in West Virginia since my Lord the beginning of West Virginia" and "we" don't need external "environmentalists from Philadelphia" to tell "us" how to do it, he is protesting against federal government regulations.

Is it true that the coal industries operating in West Virginia would be more efficient with less federal regulatory involvement?
Bud continues: "No one wants to ruin a stream! No one's going to ruin a stream! We have a Department of Natural Resources in West Virginia that's a beautiful outfit."

In an area where many coal properties are owned and operated by multinational corporations and out of state financial interests, who should oversee the enforcement of environmental protection laws - state or federal regulatory agencies?

5. **The Protestant Ethic.** The characters in **Merchant People** believe in the Protestant Ethic. The Protestant Ethic, according to Max Weber, is the belief in hard work as "proof" of salvation. It is illustrated by those who seem to have an "irrational" drive to keep busy and to work hard. Evelyn Sayre insists: "You can't pull up and leave just because things don't go right! You just can't pull up and say, 'Well, I'm done, I'm gonna quit.'" Wally Leskuski says: "It's up to yourself. If you want to make it, OKAY, you can make it!" Bud Bennett tells us that the first eight hours of work in the day will keep you alive, but will not bring success. Success comes with the work after five o'clock.

What other expressions of this "work ethic" can be found in the film?

6. **Gemeinschaft.** Ferdinand Toennies distinguished between two kinds of social organization: the Gemeinschaft and the Gesellschaft. The Gemeinschaft is typified by life in the village or the small town, where persons know each other on a first name basis, and know the parents and grandparents of many members of the community. Relationships are personal in the Gemeinschaft. Status is "ascribed," and people are known for "who they are" rather than by "what they do."
In contrast to the Gemeinschaft, Toennies describes the Gesellschaft as typical of the industrial city, where relationships are impersonal, where persons are known for what they do rather than for who they are. Here status is "achieved" rather than ascribed.

In watching this film, the viewer should ask whether or not the modern small town is still like Toennies' Gemeinschaft, or if it has become more like the Gesellschaft.

7. **Seeing the Filmmakers. Merchant People** is the vehicle through which Peter Griesinger and Michael Herschede sketched, with cinematographical power, a small piece of culture. They could have chosen a boy's gang in Chicago, the Republican Women's

Club of a northern city, or the participants of the Taos Corn Dance in New Mexico.

We need not travel to the end of the Amazon or into the Himalayan Mountains to find "native cultures." They are as close as the neighborhood grocery store or local tavern.

Look beyond the "world view" of the nine business people. See if you can see the viewpoint of the filmmakers.

Are they in sympathy with the nine characters in the film or do they disagree?

Now look again at your own world view.

Can you see it objectively? Can or should you criticize it? How does it differ from the world drawn by nine 'Merchant People' in Upshur County, West Virginia, who "did it my way"?

KEY TERMS

1. **World View.** A "view" of the "world" which describes, probably in mythological terms, why things are so, what is good and true, right and beautiful, and the opposites. It "explains" why things happen as they do. Each adult person holds onto a world view, and relies upon that world view to piece together the many things that happen in his/her "world." World views are shared with friends, families, work groups, teams, and even national groups. But there are always other groups and individuals who believe that your world view is wrong and that theirs is right.

2. **Ethnocentrism.** The belief that one's own world view is the only, or at least the very best world view, that those who see the world from a different perspective are in error.

3. **Perspective.** The view you get which is based upon the place you stand. In our own world, unemployment seems different to the bank president than to the unemployed college graduate; "male chauvinism" seems different to the male "boss" than to the female secretary. We all see the world from different perspectives.

4. **Sociological Imagination.** The imagination which allows one to see his/her social position in life in light of greater social forces.

5. **Social Construction of Reality.** The "world" we live in is "built" by our society as it teaches us what things are. "This is your mother," "this is your neighbor," "we don't like people who look like that (or act like that)," etc. As we learn to "define" things around us, we "construct" our world. We do not do it in isolation, however, but in social groups. We come to "agreements" as to what is good, what is true, what is right, and what each object "really" is. Hence, in society we "construct reality."

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

After viewing the film the student should be able to:

1. Explain what a "world view" is and describe the world view of the nine characters portrayed in the film.

2. Tell why he/she agrees/disagrees with the "world view" drawn by the characters in the film.

3. Explain "ethnocentrism" in terms of **Merchant People** characters, and in terms of his/her own world view.

4. Be able to criticize his/her own picture of how the world is made.

5. Be able to tell what "vested interests" lead these business people to draw the world as they do, and what "vested interests" cause the student to draw the picture he/she draws.

6. Be able to show how these nine people express the "work ethic" (the "Protestant Ethic").

7. Be able to describe "the sociological imagination" of some of the characters in the film.

I hope that in seeing **Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America,** the student can put some "flesh and blood" into several of the themes developed in social science classes.

4. STUDENT QUESTIONAIRE

(The teacher has permission to copy)

Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America

"Themes for the Social Sciences"
- John R. Warner, Jr., Ph. D. -

Place a check mark beside the statements below which best express the 'message' of the film to you.

1. ____ *Government is too big.*
2. ____ *Welfare has gotten out of hand.*
3. ____ *Being successful means serving the consumer in the most justified and cooperative way possible.*
4. ____ *Many poor or unemployed people would work hard if they could find a job, but are victims of great economic forces over which they have no control.*
5. ____ *The Lord helps those who help themselves.*
6. ____ *Government regulation protects our communities.*
7. ____ *Generally, people get what they deserve.*
8. ____ *It's our land and our town and we'll do with it what we want.*
9. ____ *Thrift and conservation are good ideas.*
10. ____ *Honesty is the best policy.*
11. ____ *People in business are only out for themselves.*
12. ____ *Modern technology is bringing us back to the good old American values.*
13. ____ *We should provide better support systems to help those who are less fortunate in our community.*
14. ____ *Small groups or individual owner-operators must survive in competition with multinational corporations.*
15. ____ *The freedom to own private property and to run your own business brings out the best in the American people.*
16. ____ *Life in a small town is qualitatively better than life in the city today.*

After seeing the film, mark the above questionaire, and then use it as a basis for a class discussion.

5. *SUGGESTED READINGS*

- **Abel Parker Upshur: Conservative Virginian 1790 - 1844** by Claude H. Hall
- **Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case** Edited by Helen Mathews Lewis, Linda Johnson, Donald Askins
- **Community and Society (Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft)** by Ferdinand Toennies
- **Entropy: A New World View** by Jeremy Rifkin with Ted Howard Afterword by Dr. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen
- **Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change** by Harry C. Boyte with Heather Booth and Steve Max
- **Illusions of Conventional Economics** by William H. Miernyk
- **Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective** by Peter Berger
- **Machine Dreams** by Jayne Ann Phillips
- **Megatrends** by John Naisbitts
- **Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers** by John Eller
- **Moral Man and Immoral Society** by Reinhold Niebuhr
- **Mountain Heritage (4th Edition)** Edited by B.B. Maurer
- **Notes on Virginia** by Thomas Jefferson
- **The Appalachians** by Maurice Brooks
- **The Division of Labor in Society** by Emile Durkheim
- **The Nine Nations of North America** by Joel Garreau
- **The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America** by Digby Baltzell
- **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism** by Max Weber
- **The Sociological Imagination** by C. Wright Mills
- **West Virginia and the Captains of Industry** by John Williams
- **Who Owns Appalachia: Landownership and its Impact** by the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force

6. *ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS*

Peter Root Griesinger, producer, director, and cinematographer for **Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America** currently resides in Upshur County, West Virginia, with his daughter, Nellie. He is founder and director of Griesinger Films, and has produced two large scale films besides "Merchant People".

Griesinger was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1949, and was graduated from Trinity College, in Hartford, Connecticut in 1972, where he earned a B.A. in Intercultural Studies with a minor in filmmaking. His course of study emphasized the cultural mythologies of the Aboriginal and Bushman peoples in Australia and Africa. He was especially intrigued by the effects modernization had on their traditional patterns of life. He traveled to both places to observe these people's experience first hand. After a brief post-college film apprenticeship in New York City, Griesinger took to the Appalachian Mountains where he initiated his first major film production, **Almost Heaven, Grafton, West Virginia,**"...a well produced, sensitive portrayal of a segment of Americana that has been pushed into the background of today's life" (Variety 9/29/76). This film premiered in New York City at the Museum of Modern Art in 1976. In 1980, his next independently produced project, **Small Business My Way**, was begun. This film is the original version of the re-edited "Merchant People".

Michael Herschede, designer, musical director, and editor for "Small Business My Way", met Peter Griesinger in 1980. Herschede was on his way across the country when he stopped in West Virginia to visit some friends. While here, he kept hearing about a filmmaker who had just completed shooting a 16mm film about small business. Through an introduction by mutual friends, Peter Griesinger and Michael Herschede met. Learning of Herschede's earlier involvement with video productions in New York, Griesinger offered Herschede a job editing and forming a structure to his film. Herschede began his work initially in three stages: 1) talking with Griesinger about the movie and what direction he wanted the final product to take, 2) shutting everyone out of the editing room and devoting three months to creating a beginning--middle--and an end to the piece, and finally 3) presenting the edited project to Griesinger. Upon seeing the completion of Herschede's work, Griesinger was over-whelmed. Thus a strong bond and working comraderie was formed by the two.

Herschede was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1947, and attended the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University with studies in Music, Film, Accounting, and Anthropology. He is a self-employed audio-visual contractor and consultant for governmental and social agencies in Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Herschede is presently living in West Virginia.

Shortly after its theatrical premier in 1982, "Small Business My Way" was enthusiastically received by PBS in Washington, D.C. and was broadcast nationally in May, 1983 (10:30 pm).Griesinger was not satisfied with how individual copies of "Small Business My Way" were selling, so he began making revisions early in 1984. This version of the film, "Small Business My Way/ An American Portrait" aired nationally on PBS in July, 1984 (10:00 pm).

As the political and economic debates of the 1984 presidential election intensified, Griesinger and Herschede got together again in the fall of 1984 to

begin extensive revisions of the already re-edited "Small Business My Way". Beginning with a new title and including new footage, music, graphics, and editing they completely revitalized the project. The final result, **Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America**, is a fast paced film designed to spark interest and discussion in the classroom.

CHRONOLOGY

1980 (January - May) Project formulation.
(June) 16mm filming and interviews.
(July) - 1981 (December) Griesinger organizes funding and begins editing.

1982 (January - March) Herschede designs and edits 'Small Business'.
(April - May) Griesinger and Herschede shoot additional 16mm footage and prepare lab work.
(May) 'Small Business' premiers at Kanawha Theatre, Buckhannon - a benefit screening for local Kiwanis Club's campaign to help send the high school band to the Cotton Bowl.
(June) Title changed to 'Small Business My Way' - one scene edited out. National distribution begins.
(November) 'Small Business My Way' accepted by PBS, Washington, D.C., for national primetime special.

1983 (May) Broadcast by PBS. Hecks, Inc. and Alamco national television underwriters.
(June) Finalist American Film Festival (NYC) - Citizen Action. Winner Sinking Creek Film Celebration (Nashville).
(September) Griesinger tours China with American independent filmmakers.
(October) 'Learning Guide' initiated.

1984 (January - June) Griesinger revises film - additional narration, chapter headings, and new title: 'Small Business My Way/An American Portrait'.
(July) Second national primetime broadcast by PBS - revised version. Additional television underwriting by Monongahela Power Co. and Union Carbide.
(August - October) Herschede and Griesinger collaborate on re-editing the film for distribution in the educational market - sponsored by Appalachian Fresh Water Foods. Film transfered to one-inch video; video edit with new 16mm footage, music, graphics, and title.

1985 'Learning Guide' re-written.

1986 - 1987 Distribution and marketing of final product: 'Merchant People: Pride, Power, and Belief in Rural America'.

7. A NOTE FROM THE PRODUCER

This project began early in 1980 as it became evident that the future of this nation and its ideals were being called into question. As Ronald Reagan ascended to the presidency, a great historical debate on traditional American values and their underlying assumptions began.

Today, this debate has only intensified. Millions of Americans are being affected in one way or another as we struggle to clarify our responsibilities to each other and to the rest of the world.

'Merchant People' and its accompanying 'Learning Guide' encourages students and teachers to get to the heart of these concerns. The nine people in the film speak for themselves. They present personal messages of thrift and of style as well as a whole gamut of controversial issues and contradictions. The 'Learning Guide' provides background information and classroom exercises that will help develop themes introduced in the film.

By comparing the viewpoints of the nine white rural Americans in the film with those of individual students, a lively discussion of life in the United States today will follow.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Michael Herschede for his invaluable assistance in the design and development of this project.

Peter Root Griesinger
French Creek, West Virginia

Photo by Stephen Rohleberg

Peter Griesinger

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ISBN # 0-9616762-0-5